

QUESTIONS MOST ASKED BY INTERPRETERS

1. Q. What is expected of me when interpreting at District Court?
A. As an interpreter for Federal District Court, you will be expected to translate the questions asked of the defendant/witness by counsel or the judge and to relate the defendant's answers or statements to counsel and the judge verbatim.
2. Q. Am I expected to translate simultaneously or at my own pace?
A. Depending upon your experience, translation will proceed at a pace that is comfortable for you. Of course, simultaneous translation will help the proceeding to move along quickly, but time is not a factor here. Proper translation and understanding is the important issue. You will be able to set the pace (with the Judge's assistance, if necessary). He/she may ask you or observe how translating will be the most appropriate for you.
3. Q. If I don't understand a word or statement, can I ask counsel or the judge to explain?
A. Yes, please do not hesitate to ask for clarification at any time if you are unsure of anything or to refer to your dictionary or glossary.
4. Q. What are the rates for a non-certified interpreter and for a certified interpreter?
A. See Interpreter Fee Schedule
5. Q. Is my parking paid for and is there a designated parking area?
A. You will be required to pay for parking out of your pocket; there is no designated parking area, but there are several public parking areas near each courthouse.
6. Q. Where do I report upon arrival at District Court?
A. The courtroom deputy that contacted you will instruct you where to report. Usually, you will be reporting to the Clerk's Office (unless otherwise instructed) to fill out your voucher/contract, then you will be further instructed where to report.

7. Q. How do I become a federally certified interpreter?
- A. To become certified, an interpreter must complete a criterion-referenced performance examination which shall be administered under the supervision of the Administration Office of the U.S. Courts. The examination shall consist of written and oral parts. At the present time, languages for which certification has been established are: Haitian-Creole, Navajo, and Spanish.
8. Q. Who do I contact to inquire about interpreter certification exams?
- A. Visit the courts web-site: www.nynd.uscourts.gov/CourtInt.htm.
9. Q. What do I say if a defendant or a family member asks me a question I don't feel is appropriate for me to answer?
- A. Inform the party that you have been hired by the Court and it is inappropriate to engage in general conversation with anyone other than court officials without permission of the Court.
10. Q. If I am under contract with the Court to translate for a defendant and then asked by the Probation/Pretrial Services Dept. to assist them prior to court, who will be responsible for payment?
- A. If you have assisted someone from the Probation/Pretrial Services Dept. at any time, you will still be paid by the Court.
11. Q. If I am under contract with the court to represent a defendant and then asked by an Assistant U.S. Attorney to assist them after court, who will be responsible for payment?
- A. If an Assistant U.S. Attorney requests your assistance after court, then the U.S. Attorney's office is responsible for paying you for that time. Please ask them their procedures regarding payment.
12. Q. If I translate in one case for one judge in the morning and another case for another judge in the afternoon, should I fill out two vouchers?
- A. No, you will only need to fill out one voucher and calculate all time spent with both judges. Please let each courtroom clerk know that you will be interpreting for different judges so there is no time conflicts. The voucher should reflect both case numbers.

13. Q. If I am requested to interpret for the Court and appear at the courthouse as requested and the proceeding is cancelled, will I be compensated for my time?
- A. If the contract court interpreter receives notice of cancellation of a court proceeding at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled proceeding, not counting weekends or federal holidays, no cancellation fee will be paid. If the contract court interpreter is notified of the cancellation less than 24 hours before the scheduled proceeding, not counting weekends or federal holidays, the court will compensate the interpreter with a cancellation fee equal to the applicable Half-Day rate..
14. Q. How long does it take to get paid for my services?
- A. It usually takes 2-3 weeks to receive payment for services rendered.
15. Q. Are income taxes or social security taxes deducted from my compensation?
- A. Income taxes and social security taxes shall not be deducted from a contract interpreter's compensation. Social security benefits for the contract interpreter shall be based entirely on the interpreter's contributions as a self-employed individual, and the Government shall make no contribution as an employer.
16. Q. Do I have to claim my earnings as a interpreter on my tax form?
- A. Yes, but, you will only receive an Internal Revenue Service 1099-Misc Form from the Court if you have earned \$600 or more.
17. Q. If I am requested by a court appointed attorney to translate at a jail or elsewhere, how do I get paid?
- A. The court appointed attorney should have a CJA-21 voucher for you to fill out; if not, the attorney may obtain a CJA-21 voucher at the Clerk's Office. Keep track of your time and mileage. After you have filled out the voucher, the appointed attorney will need to sign it, too. The voucher should be submitted to the courtroom clerk of the assigned Judge in the case for approval. The courtroom clerk will then forward it to the financial department for payment. (See Appendix D)
18. Q. What is the current mileage rate?
- A. See Interpreter Fee Schedule

19. Q. If I translate for two different defendants involved in the same case at the jail, can I use one CJA-21 voucher for the combined time?
- A. No, unless the two defendants are being represented by the same attorney (which is rare) and are involved in the same case. If you are interpreting for two defendants at the jail, each of their attorney's have to sign separate CJA-21 vouchers.
20. Q. Should I bring a CJA-21 voucher with me for out-of-court work, or should the attorney supply the voucher?
- A. The attorney should have a CJA-21 voucher with them, but, if not, be sure to keep track of your time and mileage. Note the name, address and telephone number of the attorney that hired you. It is the attorney's responsibility to supply the CJA-21 voucher.
21. Q. Should the attorney submit the CJA-21 voucher to the Court for payment, or should I submit it?
- A. The court appointed attorney should submit the voucher to the courtroom clerk of the judge assigned to the case for review and processing, or to the Clerk's Office.
22. Q. When I translate for the U.S. Attorney's office or in the Grand Jury, do I still get paid by the court?
- A. No, you will be paid through the U.S. Attorney's office.